

Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
Monday May 11, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. Minutes
held through Zoom video conference
during COVID-19 global pandemic

Chair: Diane Lepage

Present: Ken Young, Ted Farnworth, Owen Clarkin, Ann MacKenzie, Eleanor Zurbrigg, Fenja Brodo, Annie Belair, Catherine Hessian, Henry Steger, Bob Cermak, Jakob Mueller, Bev McBride, Elizabeth Moore, Diane Holmes, Dwayne Lepitzki, Diane Kitching, Anouk Hoedeman,

Absent: Gord Robertson,

1. Approval of the Agenda – the agenda was approved as circulated
2. Acceptance of Minutes from April 20, 2020 – **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Henry Steger, acceptance of the minutes of the April 20, 2020 meeting. **CARRIED**
3. Business Arising from Minutes - nil
4. Treasurer's Report – Ann: nil to report
5. Issues for Discussion/Decisions
 - a. Ad hoc working group for OFNC activity digital footprint during Covid-19 pandemic

Bev had circulated an email suggesting that OFNC should try to develop some ideas to serve members while regular meetings and field trips are not possible. She had discussed this with some OFNC members informally but feels the initiative needs some coordination. Bev has volunteered to chair an ad hoc working group. Ideas that were suggested included a monthly newsletter that could be circulated, probably by email. Bev offered to write an initial newsletter comprising an overview of the Club's digital resources. Although the Events Committee has circulated links to on-line events that similar clubs, e.g. Guelph, are running, it was felt that OFNC should be able to offer similar presentations. It was suggested that virtual field trips might be possible, particularly if OFNC has photo resources for particular trails. It might also be possible to turn some planned upcoming speakers' presentations into virtual presentations. The advantages and disadvantages of possible digital formats, such as webinars, Zoom or YouTube, were discussed. OFNC's current Zoom package would probably not support such a presentation. Jakob will arrange an events committee meeting and ask those members not on the BoD if they are interested in participating in this initiative. Gord will also be consulted and other Chairs should ask their committee members whether they are interested.

Moved by Bev McBride, seconded by Owen Clarkin, that an ad hoc working group be set up to develop on-line OFNC activities. **CARRIED**

6. Committee Updates

a) Macoun Club

The Club is currently inactive. Diane K advised the Board that Rob Lee will be announcing his retirement as Macoun Club Chair and leader effective at the end of June. No replacement has yet been identified. Diane L suggested that Rob be asked to prepare a "job description". Ted noted that OFNC needs to do a better job with succession planning in all areas and needs more written directions for all positions. Annie suggested that more delegation would be required for one person to take on the position. Ken raised the possibility of dividing the position into two jobs, one as Chair and one as field trip leader. Appropriate recognition of Rob's contribution was discussed.

b) Publications

The BoD was delighted that using Zoom had enabled Dwayne to join the meeting. Dwayne reported that Publications is working on the next issue of CFN and that the journal continues to catch up with its publication schedule. Robert Forsyth has worked very quickly to help facilitate this and has been re-signed to a further contract. Volume 133.4 has been posted on-line, thereby completing Volume 133 (2019) in 9½ months. It is not clear whether the printers are working currently. There may be a delay with the print version. A tribute to Francis Cook will appear in the next issue. Ann noted that Bob Bergquist had sent out tax receipts, together with a special letter, for donations in memory of Francis to CFN's Manning Fund. It was hoped that publication of the tribute might result in further donations. Fenja complimented the special letter.

Diane L complimented Annie on the latest issue of T&L.

c) Membership

Henry reported that new membership is down significantly. It was suggested that this may reflect the fact that the club cannot currently offer any programming.

d) Fletcher Wildlife Garden

The FWG is currently inactive. AAFC is dictating closure of roads, parking lots, etc. It is still unclear what, if any, activity is allowed. Ted has noted that there are still people walking around and the BYG is still attracting groups of people. City by-law officers have jurisdiction over the FWG. Ted has emphasised to volunteers that it is not clear whether they would be insured if they work on their own. The FWG Management Committee is planning to meet through Zoom on May 13. The plant sale remains postponed. Sandy is maintaining the plants. A late summer sale might be possible. If not, Sandy will try to overwinter the plants.

e) Finance

Ken is working on some technicalities for the accounting of CFN revenues and expenses.

f) Events

No events are currently planned. Jakob will email members of the committee not on the BoD to see if they want to join the ad hoc committee as discussed above. He will also find out if this month's speaker would be prepared to present an on-line event. The merits of webinars versus Zoom were discussed.

g) Safe Wings

Anouk reported that the team is busy with migration season. They are monitoring a red tailed hawk nest where one parent has been killed and providing extra food for the remaining parent. The Ottawa Bird Strategy was released on May 8 to coincide with migratory bird day. Catherine inquired whether Ottawa had a "lights out" programme during migration. Anouk advised that she has tried to generate interest in Ottawa but, with the exception of the NAC, there has not been much buy in

h) Conservation

Owen had received an invitation from Ontario Nature to participate in a bioblitz at Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve. He said that he would be interested but the initiative may be affected by the pandemic. A reporter from The Narwhal had made contact asking what OFNC had noted in terms of habitat loss in southern Canada. Owen had also been asked to volunteer to host a virtual event in Hampton Park which has received funding to do nature activities. Owen is exploring how to get access to natural areas during the pandemic, e.g. Ontario Parks are opening for "naturalist activities" which is hopeful but it is not clear what other properties are open. Conservation has active projects in Alfred Bog and Gillies Grove. They are officially closed but perhaps OFNC may be allowed access. With less field work, Owen is working to write up some observations.

i) Birds

Currently bird sighting reports are suspended. As other restrictions are now being relaxed, Bob wondered whether reporting should be resumed. It was felt that a decision should be deferred to the end of May. Bev noted one case where a sighting at Richmond Lagoon had been reported to eBird and significant numbers of people had turned up. A pair of rare birds had been seen nest building at a local site and somebody had shared the information on WhatsApp. Jeff Skevington has asked for volunteers to help protect these birds. Bev noted that the birds in question are protected, both federally and provincially.

It was noted that Ottawa Rare Bird Alert, which had stopped reporting early in the pandemic, is now reporting again.

Bob and a couple of other members of the committee had been made aware of the sighting of a very rare bird. Bob had taken the decision to suppress this information.

j) Awards – Eleanor: nil to report

k) Education & Publicity – no report

7. Other Business

Ted brought up the subject of the little publicised, and imminent, City vote on the expansion of the urban boundary. It is too late to have any influence on this decision at this point but he wondered whether there was any way for OFNC to get involved in such issues in the future. It was noted that other organisations often ask for our input in such matters. Diane H suggested the possibility of creating a committee concerned with monitoring municipal politics. She noted, however, that OFNC already has a significant number of committees. She advised that changing the City's current practice of favouring development would require a very long term view. Unless the public can be convinced to support councillors such that they do not rely on support from developers, the City's habit of approving development will continue.

Jakob noted that the Ontario Municipal Board has been dissolved such that, in the event that Council does ever deny a planning application, the decision cannot be overturned.

8. Adjournment – **moved** by Diane Lepage, seconded by Jakob Mueller, that the meeting be adjourned. **CARRIED**

Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Moore

Upcoming Meeting Dates

June 15, 2020

September 21, 2020

October 19, 2020

November 16, 2020

December 21, 2020